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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000919

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STATE FOR EUR/SCE, USNATO FOR AMBASSADOR NULAND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/27/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [NATO](#) [MK](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA'S NATO BID: KEEPING SKOPJE FOCUSED ON  
BUCHAREST 2008

REF: SKOPJE 896

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(b) & (d).

#### SUMMARY

11. (C) During a round of meetings November 19-20, the Ambassador pressed all major political party leaders to take real action to quickly implement reforms needed to strengthen Macedonia's NATO bid. Opposition leaders cited the negative atmosphere in parliament as a hindrance to political consensus, but also noted that there had been substantial progress toward agreement on a draft public prosecutors law in recent days. Implementation of the May 29 Agreement (reftel) also has moved ahead, although opposition DUI has thrown a wrench into the process by adding new demands that exceed the terms of that agreement. The government is taking concrete steps to implement the Law on Police, and there is general agreement on the need to complete the State Judicial Council before year's end. While we believe we can count on the government to take additional steps over the coming weeks to complete NATO membership tasks, we will have to press DUI to demonstrate greater flexibility in dealing with implementation of the May 29 Agreement, or risk being painted as an obstacle to Macedonia's NATO bid. End summary.

TOUR DE TABLE WITH POLITICAL LEADERS: "NEED CONCRETE RESULTS, QUICKLY"

12. (U) The Ambassador met November 19-20 with the leaders of governing VMRO, DPA, and NSDP, and with the leaders of opposition SDSM and DUI, to underscore the urgent need for all parties to work together to complete the tasks outlined by USNATO Ambassador Nuland and her team during their November 8 visit to Skopje to discuss Macedonia's NATO candidacy (reftel). The DCM met separately with opposition LDP November 21 to make the same points, and followed up with DUI on November 23.

13. (U) The Ambassador highlighted the need for all leaders to demonstrate that the Macedonian parliament is capable of working constructively, and that political debate can proceed without excessive levels of vitriolic and damaging rhetoric on all sides. She pressed for rapid progress on Framework Agreement (FWA) implementation (e.g., the police law); implementation of the May 29 Agreement; judicial reforms; and for redoubled efforts to manage the name dispute with Greece.

TOXIC ATMOSPHERE IN PARLIAMENT HAMPERS POLITICAL CONSENSUS....

14. (SBU) SDSM President Sekerinska said she believed the country could complete the remaining tasks required for NATO membership, but that the toxic atmosphere in the parliament was hampering prospects for moving quickly on them. She said SDSM would support legislative actions required to implement elements of the May 29 agreement, but that DPA's behavior in parliament had blocked progress in that regard. She claimed the government was unwilling to work together with the opposition, even when there was agreement on the issues.

...BUT PARTIES CLOSE TO AGREEMENT ON PUBLIC PROSECUTOR LAW

15. (SBU) The Ambassador urged Sekerinska to continue to work with the government toward a NATO invitation. Sekerinska conceded that SDSM and the government were close to agreement on the draft law on the public prosecutor, disagreeing only on one remaining point regarding the procedures for replacing or renewing the mandates of current prosecutors. In a later meeting with the Ambassador, PM Gruevski also agreed the two sides were close to agreement on the draft public prosecutor law.

MAY 29 IMPLEMENTATION -- DUI DEMANDS EXCEED THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT

16. (C) NSDP President Petkovski said his party would support the legislative elements of the May 29 Agreement, including passing the draft law on the parliamentary inter-ethnic committee (IEC) and adding a list of 46 laws to that legislation that would require a Badinter (qualified majority) vote to either amend or adopt. DPA's Thaci said his party had no alternative but to support the IEC law,

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despite its earlier reservations, since failure to do so would be seen as blocking Macedonia's NATO aspirations. PM Gruevski also was hopeful that the IEC law and the Badinter law list would be adopted in short order, and asked for U.S. assistance in keeping SDSM and DUI constructively engaged.

17. (SBU) DUI's Ahmeti was cautiously optimistic about the IEC package, but insisted that the list of 46 laws be included as a single package in the draft IEC law, despite the government's argument that 45 laws already are on the books and the 46th, a law on the use of language, has not been drafted, debated in parliament, or adopted. Comment: The government's proposal to add the 45 existing laws to the IEC law, and to include a clause to the effect that any future laws dealing with the use of language also would require a Badinter vote, is a compromise deemed acceptable by us and the international community. End comment.

18. (C) Ahmeti also said DUI would insist on a law on former NLA fighters, to supplement the government's current offer of a social package for victims of the 2001 conflict. The Ambassador pointed out that Ahmeti's suggestion was going well beyond the terms of the May 29 Agreement. He replied that he was simply "elaborating on the agreement and making it more sophisticated." He argued that, absent such a law, future governments might not feel obliged to uphold the obligation to provide the social benefits promised by the Gruevski government. PM Gruevski later said that it would be important to allow DPA, given its constituency, to take some of the credit for the social package.

19. (C) Ahmeti said DUI also would demand that an eventual language law should be based on the Kosovo model, which he claimed provided for both Albanian and Serbian to be used as official languages. The Ambassador warned against using Kosovo as an example in this or any other case, and pressed DUI to work on finding an acceptable compromise law within the framework of the FWA and the Macedonian Constitution. Overestimating his leverage, Ahmeti offered to withdraw the law on former NLA fighters if the government would agree to adopting a language law that met DUI's requirements. The

Ambassador said we could not offer any guarantees for that outcome, but left it to Ahmeti to propose that approach to the government.

¶10. (C) PM Gruevski later told the Ambassador it would be useful if all four major parties (VMRO, DPA, SDSM, DUI) took part in the language law discussions. The Ambassador agreed, but said it would first be necessary for VMRO and DUI to agree on a core draft law which would then be discussed through normal parliamentary channels.

#### POLICE LAW IN TRAIN?

¶11. (C) Sekerinska said municipalities had yet to receive from the Ministry of Interior (MOI) lists of potential police commander candidates, one of the key steps in implementing the FWA-related Law on Police. She added that the MOI had not consulted with the municipalities regarding potential candidates, which could make it more difficult to secure the approval of the MOI's proposed police commanders by the municipal councils. (NOTE: Sekerinska's statements were at odds with the Minister of Interior's November 15 comments to us reporting that 15 or 16 lists of candidates had been sent to various municipalities, and that she herself had been in touch with the mayors of DUI-controlled Gostivar and Debar to discuss the candidates. End note.) In her meeting with DUI President Ahmeti, the Ambassador urged that DUI work directly with the MOI on the lists of proposed police commanders. Ahmeti was silent on the matter.

#### STATE JUDICIAL COUNCIL: ALL ABOARD (MINUS DPA)

¶12. (SBU) NSDP's Petkovski told the Ambassador he could accept the Bosniak candidate for the State Judicial Council (SJC) proposed by President Crvenkovski, which would complete the composition of that body, and PM Gruevski said he was confident the SJC would be completed before year's end. DUI's Ahmeti also was positive that his party could support the candidate. DPA's Thaci, on the other hand, said the President's proposal was an unacceptable "provocation" that would weaken ethnic Albanian control of the SJC's Badinter

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voting mechanism. Comment: Thaci's contention is baseless, since the SJC does not vote along Badinter lines. End comment.

#### MANAGING THE NAME ISSUE

¶13. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's message regarding the need to manage the name dispute with Greece in a low-key manner, and to avoid reacting to provocation from Athens, SDSM's Sekerinska warned that PM Gruevski would try to use the name dispute to deflect public criticism in the event Macedonia lost its NATO bid. She said it would be important for the USG, and NATO, to ensure the GOM understood that it could not hide behind the name issue as a reason for a failed NATO bid if the country failed to meet performance standards.

¶14. (C) NSDP's Petkovski said he was concerned that Ambassador Nuland's November 8 message appeared to have called for Macedonia to compromise on the name issue, which would be politically difficult, if not impossible, before the Bucharest summit. Ambassador Milovanovic said the USG was pushing both sides to approach the ongoing UN talks in the spirit of compromise and flexibility in order to demonstrate some progress in the matter. That did not, however, require Macedonia to resolve the issue before the NATO summit in Bucharest in April 2008.

#### COMMENT

¶15. (C) PM Gruevski has clearly decided to move ahead on several elements of the May 29 implementation. As of late afternoon on November 23, the parliament was debating the draft IEC law and the format for adding the list of 46 laws.

DUI, however, had further hardened its position by then, insisting during a meeting with the DCM on linking progress on any single point in the May 29 Agreement to "parallel progress" on the other points, an approach we firmly rejected. DUI remained unyielding in insisting that the list of 46 Badinter laws be added to the IEC law as a single package, a demand the government is unwilling to bend on. While we have the government's attention and can count on additional steps to complete NATO membership tasks in the coming weeks, we will have to further pressure DUI to recognize that it must seize this opportunity to implement the points in the May 29 Agreement, and not try to get more out of the agreement at this time. Otherwise, DUI risks being viewed, both domestically and internationally, as a major obstacle to further progress on Macedonia's NATO bid.

MILOVANOVIC